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RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1920
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000328

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/15/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MDC WARNS OF BOYCOTT

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai told the Ambassador on April 15 that the MDC leadership is meeting to consider options but, given escalating levels of violence, an election boycott is likely. Tsvangirai advisor and South African businessman Strive Masiyiwa had also told the Ambassador the previous day that an MDC boycott was likely. Masiyiwa said the MDC was working out an agreement with Arthur Mutambara and his supporters, but had decided not to work with Simba Makoni. On SADC, Masiyiwa said the MDC was considering asking that South African President Thabo Mbeki step down as point person on Zimbabwe. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The Ambassador talked by phone April 15 with Tsvangirai who was in South Africa. Tsvangirai said that, in

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light of increasing violence, the MDC was meeting to discuss a boycott of a runoff election should the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) announce that neither Tsvangirai or Mugabe received more than fifty percent of the vote.

13. (C) Masiyiwa in an April 14 phone conversation told the Ambassador that at this point there were four possible scenarios from the MDC's point of view: 1) capitulation by ZANU-PF and recognition that Tsvangirai had won; 2) a government of national unity led by the MDC; 3) a runoff election; and 4) an MDC boycott of the runoff election. Since ZANU-PF would never give away power and would never accept the MDC as a senior partner in a government of national unity, only the latter two were realistic, according to Masiyiwa. Masiyiwa said the MDC had in fact won the election. A runoff election would not recognize this reality. A boycott would make the point that Tsvangirai had won, and would also make a statement that the MDC would not

participate in an election where pervasive violence and intimidation made that election unfair.

¶4. (C) Masiyiwa also said that the MDC was in the process of concluding a unification agreement with Arthur Mutambara and his supporters. The MDC had decided not to work with Simba Makoni. Masiyiwa said this was because the MDC was piqued Makoni had shown up in Lusaka for the SADC summit, and because Makoni had raised the possibility of a government of national unity. He further told the Ambassador that the MDC had reached its limits with Mbeki (presumably after Mbeki's photo-op with Mugabe before the Lusaka SADC Summit at which he said there was no crisis in Zimbabwe) and was considering asking SADC to replace Mbeki as point person for Zimbabwe.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) The MDC previously said it would contest a runoff election under protest since it believed Tsvangirai had won the requisite fifty-plus percent. Last week, its national council voted to boycott and the leadership appears to be taking this seriously. While the MDC threatened a boycott before the March 29 election, in the end it participated, buoyed by an opening of democratic space and an absence of violence and intimidation during the campaign period. Despite the fact that most Zimbabweans would like to see Mugabe out, the MDC appears to be concluding that increasing violence and intimidation, particularly in rural areas, may make a Tsvangirai win not possible. A boycott would therefore be preferable to participating and losing. If the MDC does boycott, however, there appears to be no plan B after Mugabe is reelected.

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¶6. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: While an alliance with the Mutambara faction is positive, we continue to believe that Tsvangirai should reach out to Makoni. Makoni won about

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eight percent of the vote and, in the event of a runoff, could attract additional support from ZANU-PF. Apart from whether or not there is a runoff, a public Tsvangirai-Makoni alliance would send a powerful anti-Mugabe message. Lastly, Makoni and his followers could provide important assistance in strategizing a way forward to the MDC. END COMMENT.

MC GEE